

Dietary intake of schoolchildren and adolescents in developing countries.

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Abstract

School age and adolescence is a dynamic period of growth and development forming a strong foundation for good health and productive adult life. Appropriate dietary intake is critical for forming good eating habits and provides the much needed nutrients for growth, long-term health, cognition and educational achievements. A large proportion of the population globally is in the school age or adolescence, with more than three quarters of these groups living in developing countries. An up-to-date review and discussion of the dietary intake of schoolchildren and adolescents in developing countries is suitable to provide recent data on patterns of dietary intake, adequacy of nutrient intake and their implications for public health and nutrition issues of concern. This review is based on literature published from 2000 to 2014 on dietary intake of schoolchildren and adolescents aged 6-19 years. A total of 50 studies from 42 countries reporting on dietary intake of schoolchildren and adolescents were included. The dietary intake of schoolchildren and adolescents in developing countries is limited in diversity, mainly comprising plant-based food sources, but with limited intake of fruits and vegetables. There is a low energy intake and insufficient micronutrient intake. At the same time, the available data indicate an emerging trend of consumption of high-energy snacks and beverages, particularly in urban areas. The existence of a negative and positive energy balance in the same population points to the dual burden of malnutrition and highlights the emerging nutrition transition in developing countries. This observation is important for planning public health nutrition approaches that address the concerns of the two ends of the nutrition divide.